

THE BRAILLE MONITOR

INKPRINT EDITION

VOICE OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND



The National Federation of the Blind is not an organization speaking for the blind--it is the blind speaking for themselves

N. F. B. Headquarters
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THE BRAILLE MONITOR

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MONITOR TAPE EDITION AVAILABLE

The tape edition of the BRAILLE MONITOR is now available upon request. Arrangements for the taping have been made by Gwen Rittgers and Cotton Busby through the cooperation of the Kansas City Association of the Blind. The reading is being carried out by Gwen Rittgers.

Ways and Means for the Blind, of Augusta, Georgia, is providing the equipment, tapes and mailing containers to assist this project of the National Federation.

In order to obtain the tape edition, send your name and address to the Berkeley office of the National Federation of the Blind, 2652 Shasta Road, Berkeley, California 94708.

THE WORLD COUNCIL AND THE WORLD CHALLENGE

By
Russell Kletzing

(Editor's note: Mr. Kletzing is president of the National Federation of the Blind.)

"The Problems of the Blind in a Changing World" was the announced theme of the 1964 General Assembly of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind (a convention held every five years,) which met in New York City in the closing days of July. At the end of the two-week-long meeting the consensus of the delegates representing genuine organizations of the blind was clear: the challenge posed by the convention theme had not been met, and the overriding problems of the blind in a changing world were not adequately confronted by the world agency designed for their welfare.

The World Council's assembly, held at the Statler Hilton Hotel, was composed preponderantly of representatives from agencies for the blind throughout the world. Of approximately 90 delegate votes, according to figures announced by the Secretary-General, about 56 represented agencies and 34 represented organizations of the blind--a ratio of eight agency delegates for every five from the organized blind. Five out of six U.S. delegates, for example, were agency spokesmen--with Dr. Jacobus tenBroek, the delegate of the National Federation of the Blind, as the sole representative of this country's organized blind. Likewise five of

the six English delegates were agency employees, and both Australian delegates were also from agencies--even though the latter country has a vigorous organization of the blind.

The same story was repeated for many other nations. Moreover, a number of the delegates from organizations of the blind revealed unmistakable fear of agency reprisal when the pressure was on. In marked contrast was the German bloc, where all six delegates spoke for organizations of the blind who are in substantial control of nearly all work for the blind in their country.

Within the agency group that predominates in the World Council, control rests with an Anglo-American entente. The American Foundation the American Foundation for Overseas Blind, and the Foundation's captive organization, the American Association of Workers for the Blind controlled four of the six American votes. Great Britain--with cooperation induced by old empire loyalties, by hopes for future financial contributions, and by a common agency bond--controls agency delegates from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, Ceylon, Malaysia, and a host of other countries. Other agency delegates are inclined to vote with the leadership, based apparently on the distrust so prevalent within the agencies of any organization made up of blind people themselves.

The facts of the World Council convention are simple; the real story lies in the undercurrent. Colonel E.A. Baker, president since the formation of the WCWB in 1951, relinquished the presidency to Eric Boulter of the American Foundation for Overseas Blind--leaving Robert Barnett, the American Foundation's director, still in effective control of the president's office. Baker, along with Kingsley Dassanaikie of Ceylon and Sir Clutha MacKenzie of New Zealand, were elected to newly created positions as honorary members. However, the petition filed by Dr. Fatima Shah and five other delegates nominating Dr. Isabelle Grant for honorary membership was not even brought to the floor for consideration.

Although in general the British-American leadership of the World Council held a firm hand, several representatives of the organized blind of developing countries were elected to the executive committee. Dr. tenBroek himself, though defeated by American agency votes, received a surprisingly large number of ballots for a membership-at-large on the executive committee.

Two of the assembly sessions were held in the United Nations building, with the rest at the Statler Hilton. During all the sessions those attending were provided with earphones which, through UN-style simul-

taneous translation, gave either English or French versions of all presentations at the choice of the listener.

The major part of the convention was devoted to the presentation of learned papers expressing the philosophy and practices of agencies for the blind from various parts of the world. Among the topics discussed --with discussion limited almost exclusively to delegates--were: the social impact of blindness; modern approaches to financial assistance to the blind; providing employment for the blind; the problems of the aging blind; the problems of blind people with multiple handicaps; and technological developments in work for the blind. One of the convention's outstanding papers was an analysis of the causes, extent and distribution of blindness throughout the world, by John F. Wilson, executive director of Great Britain's Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind. The latest cassette-style talking books developed in England and the status of library services in our own country, were also items of considerable interest.

We Americans, sometimes to our sorrow, are chauvinistically accustomed to thinking that our ways of doing things are the best in the world. By the end of the World Council Meeting, it was only too evident that we are far behind many European countries in work for the blind. Germany, England, Italy and a half a dozen other European countries have not only substantially more complete social security programs for the blind, but (far more important) they have placed a substantially higher percentage of blind people in competitive industries than we have in the United States. Although we have much to contribute to developing countries, we also have much to learn from those who have outstripped us.

A dramatic highlight of the convention--one definitely unplanned by the leadership--came with the election of Dr. tenBroek by the delegates to a place on the resolutions committee, although the leadership had refrained from nominating him. This episode occurred after Dr. tenBroek rose from the floor to question the announced intention of the chairman (Colonel Baker) to appoint committees which everyone had supposed were elective. Caught by surprise, the leadership was forced to allow elections from the floor--thereby permitting the election of a number of independent-minded delegates from organizations of the blind to positions on various committees.

The resolution which Dr. tenBroek subsequently drafted on Financial Assistance to the Blind (reprinted immediately following this article) is the most concise and brilliant statement of Federation philosophy on this subject so far produced; and its merit was open acknowledged even by such members of the Anglo-American leadership entente as Secretary-

General John Jarvis and England's John Wilson.

An indication of the "hard line" taken by agencies throughout the world, and their desire to maintain control of the World Council, was provided by their negative action on a constitutional amendment proposed by Dr. tenBroek which would require at least half of any delegation from a country possessing an organization of the blind to be representatives of the organized blind. This equalitarian amendment could only muster 15 votes against the agency steamroller.

In addition to the moderate gains achieved in seating representatives of the organized blind on the executive committee, some progress was made by the World Council through unanimous adoption of another resolution, also authored by Dr. tenBroek, endorsing the principle of independent organization of blind people. The obvious and unassailable merit of the principle of self-organization of the blind overcame the obvious reluctance of some of the agency leadership, particularly Robert Barnett, and produced a unanimous vote for the proposition that "the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind adopts a policy of encouraging the development of independent organizations of the blind throughout the world." Though the fact was never officially discussed on the floor of the General Assembly, nearly all delegates were well aware that simultaneously the International Federation of the Blind had been formed to provide a means of representation of the organized blind of the world.

Assessment of the World Council's General Assembly should take the form of constructive analysis. Although the WCWB is now dominated by old-line agencies for the blind across the world, it is moving grudgingly toward the democratic principle of greater representation for the organized blind. Moreover, it is a worthwhile organization performing a useful function.

The World Council provides a forum for the exchange of considered approaches to work for the blind among agency representatives engaged in such work throughout the world. However, while the organization can be made more representative and more effective, it is clear that with general assembly meetings scheduled only five years or more apart the pace is likely to be glacially slow.

Nevertheless the very theme of the convention brought to the forefront the challenge of the blind in a changing world--for they cannot and will not wait for natural evolution and reluctant gradualism to meet their problems. The inauguration of the new International Federation of the Blind--at the very same time as the World Council's convention--repre-

sents an organized awareness of this challenge and a concerted determination to meet it.

Millions of blind people in Africa, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and a host of other developed or developing countries are today living hopeless lives of beggary or worse. If their lot is not soon improved, their plight of misery and degradation will loom as one more critical chink in the armor of western-style democracy--a fact to be exploited by dictatorships of all shades throughout the world. Only decisive and direct action on a massive scale can begin the tremendous process of starting these blind millions on the road to fully productive lives. It is a lesson of contemporary history that the blind of the world are the people --in fact the only people-- who can supply the spark, the excitement, and the enthusiasm necessary to kindle the fires of progress toward the ultimate social and economic salvation of the world's blind populations.

It is an awesome task; but the International Federation of the Blind, supported by our own National Federation and by increasing numbers of independent blind people the world over, has organized to get it done.

A RESOLUTION ON FINANCIAL AID TO THE BLIND

(Editor's note: The following resolution, authored by Dr. Jacobus tenBroek and approved by the resolutions committee on the 1964 General Assembly of the World Council for the Welfare of the Blind, depicts a model program for aid to the blind on the part of countries throughout the world --a program, incidentally, not yet achieved in most parts of the United States.)

The attention of member nations and of all other nations is called to the urgency of providing financial assistance to blind persons in need thereof.

Programs of financial assistance should be addressed to the over-all objectives of dignity, of economic independence and social interdependence as well as of meeting the elementary needs of subsistence and health. The items of need and the standard of assistance should commensurate with the habits of life and the social and economic patterns of the community.

In the achievement and implementation of this over-all objective the

following general principles should be given recognition:

(1) The financial assistance to the individual should be sufficient to cover: (a) common human needs for food, clothing, shelter, medical assistance and family life; (b) needs common to all members of the group arising out of or relating to blindness including additional expenses incurred in daily living and the cost of technical aids and appliances developed for the use of blind persons; (c) the additional special needs of individuals.

(2) The amount of financial assistance to the individual under categories 1(a) and 1(b) should be a specified minimum determined on a basis of group needs rather than on a basis of individual needs and the means test. The amount of assistance in category 1(c) should be individually determined on the basis of the special needs of the individual.

(3) Under the plan of financial assistance, blind persons should be helped out of distress and not merely in it. Accordingly, pauperization should not be a condition of the grant. Eligible persons should be allowed to retain resources and income useful in the process of rehabilitation gaining self-support. The plan of financial assistance should be adapted to rehabilitation and employment, to self-care and self-support. This should be done through the provision of incentives, such as permitting the recipient to retain some of the rewards of effort and activity, rather than through the use of compulsion, reduction of the grant, or increasing hardships.

(4) A self-reliant spirit and independent activity should be encouraged by preserving to the individual freedom in the management of his own affairs including living arrangements, choice of consumption items, occupational objectives and leisure-time activities.

(5) The conditions of eligibility and the terms of administration of financial aid should be clearly specified in the basic legislation so that administrators, social workers, and recipients may know their rights, duties, and relationships.

(6) Blindness is a distinct disability, different in its nature and in its social consequences from other physical disabilities, from old age, or from the condition of dependent children. Just as the substantive provisions of the financial aid plan should take account of this fact, so should the administration. The extent feasible, persons should be employed to carry out the plan who are knowledgeable about the special problems of the blind.

("This resolution is recommended for adoption by a unanimous vote of the Resolutions Committee.")

IMPENDING BREAKTHROUGH ON DISABILITY INSURANCE

One of the Federation's greatest potential victories in many years hangs in the balance, as this is written, before a joint conference committee of the Senate and House.

The tense situation results from the successful effort of Senator Hubert Humphrey (now Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate) to gain acceptance of the Federation's proposals for disability insurance reforms as an amendment to the Administration's social security bill (H. R. 11865)

The disability proposals, originally contained in the Federation-sponsored Senate bill, S. 1268, were adopted unanimously by the Senate--but their ultimate fate rests with the impending action of the Senate-House conference committee. The character of the proposed changes, and the urgent need for them, have been eloquently stated by Senator Humphrey in a Senate speech of September 3.

"My amendment would liberalize the federal disability insurance program for persons who are now blind--and, perhaps of greater importance, it would make disability insurance payments more readily available to more persons who become blind at the time when blindness occurs," the Senator said.

He noted that the proposal would (1) incorporate the generally used definition of blindness into the provisions of the disability insurance law; (2) make it possible for a blind person who has worked in a social-security covered employment for six quarters (a year and a half) to qualify for disability cash benefits, and (3) it would allow qualified blind persons "to draw disability benefits, and to continue to draw them, as long as they remain blind--and irrespective of their income or earnings, if they are fortunate enough to be employed."

In his speech Senator Humphrey pointed out that "under present law, a person who is blind and unable to secure social security covered work for five years, cannot qualify for disability insurance payments. Reducing the present requirement from 20 to six quarters would be a much more reasonable and realistic requirement for people who, though often-

times well qualified for gainful work, will encounter much difficulty in obtaining any work at all.

"Under existing law, a worker who becomes blind but has not worked for five years in covered employment is denied the sustaining support of disability insurance payments at a time when the whole world has collapsed, when disaster has terminated his earnings and diminished his earning power, and he is faced with surrendering dignity and self-pride and applying for public or private charity--hardly a sound basis upon which to rebuild a shattered life, hardly the basis for instilling self-confidence and reviving hope--so essential as the first step in rehabilitation and restoration to normal life and productive livelihood."

The Minnesota lawmaker declared that "under existing law, a person who is blind and earns but the meagerest of income, is denied disability insurance payments on the ground that even the meagerest earnings indicate such a person is not disabled--or sufficiently disabled in the eyes of the law--to qualify for disability payments.

"As a matter of fact, the economic consequences of blindness exist, and continue to exist, even though a blind person is employed and earning, and these economic consequences are expensive to the blind person who has the will and the courage to compete in a profession or business with sighted people, who must live and work in a society structured for sighted people," he said.

"Adoption of this amendment would provide a minimum floor of financial security to the person who must live and work without sight, who must pay a price in dollars and cents for wanting and daring to function in equality with sighted men," Senator Humphrey concluded.

BROTHERHOOD'S "MONEY-MAKING" SCHEME APPROVED

Whatever its difficulties in fund raising, the American Brotherhood for the Blind is on the way to "making money" in virtually unlimited amounts. And what is more, the scheme to "counterfeit" U.S. coins has the full approval of the Treasury Department.

It all began with a recent proposal by the producers of Twin Vision Books--a Brotherhood project of children's books combining print and Braille--to include raised illustrations in their volumes.

Among the many items to be illustrated were various denominations of coins--the illustrations to be made from actual coins pasted to a master

sheet to be used in a vacuum plastic forming machine.

It was quickly realized by Mrs. Jean Dyon Norris, founder and director of Twin Vision Books, that the reproduction of U.S. coins might run afoul of federal laws governing the counterfeit manufacture of currency. And, when clearance was sought from the Treasury Department, it looked at first as if the educational and philanthropic project would have to be scrapped. The federal authorities turned thumbs down, and the non-profit Brotherhood (which distributes its books free to the blind) felt itself suspiciously regarded as a slick counterfeiting ring.

Convinced of the educational importance as well as the legitimate character of their proposal, however, Mrs. Norris and Dr. Jacobus tenBroek, the Brotherhood's president, persisted in their campaign for official clearance. That approval came in mid-July, in the form of a letter from the Treasury Department stating its authoritative opinion that "the proposal to produce illustrations of coins on plastic sheets would not be in violation of any existing statute."

And so at last, as Mrs. Norris puts it, "we are free to start turning out money of our own--in book form, of course! "

INTERNATIONAL SUMMER

By
Russell Kletzing

(Editor's note: The following is revised from an article by Mr. Kletzing published in the COSERV Newsletter, Fall, 1964.)

The summer is over and I am sorry--and this is passing strange for a resident of torrid Sacramento. The reason is that our international visitors from all over the world have returned to their countries and their work. The visit of these dynamic blind leaders represented one of the most exciting and stimulating experiences in my life and the lives of many Federationists. Most arrived in time for our Phoenix convention and stayed through the World Council General Assembly in New York. In between, they visited institutions and agencies for the blind as well as organizations of the blind.

Most of all, however, these blind leaders were people with individual and stimulating personalities. There was Rienzi Alagiyawanna, President of the Ceylon Association of the Blind, elected as first vice-president of the International Federation of the Blind in acknowledgment of his brilliant leadership ability. There were Suresh Ahuja and Dr. Rajendra Vyas, leaders of the organized blind in India--Suresh with his captivating western-style personality and the suave diplomacy of Lyndon Johnson, and Rajendra, the accomplished attorney and scholar who most ably discharged the duties of the resolutions committee chairman at the World Council

Lucy Ching, social worker in a Center for the Blind in Hong Kong, organized the Blind Friends of Hong Kong only a few months ago after her contact with Dr. Isabelle Grant. It has grown in this short time to 110 members. She says that her invitation by the National Federation to come to the United States in itself has done much to encourage families to bring their blind members out of back rooms and into Hong Kong's social life, because of the recognition it implies. That the hopes of the blind of this teaming metropolis are pinned on Lucy is evidenced by the more than 500 blind people who came to the Hong Kong airport to see her off.

Lee Ah Kow, too, is of Chinese ancestry, but lives in strife-torn Malaysia. His newly organized Selangor Society of the Blind is fighting the classical struggle against unrelenting agency opposition. Ah Kow stayed at our home in Sacramento and occupies a special niche with us.

There was Tim Fuery from Queensland, Australia, solid as a rock in his convictions and giving one of the best talks at the Phoenix Convention; and there was Hugh Jeffrey, President of the Australia Blind and his vivacious wife Alison, who travelled about more than any other of our international guests. There were Jagdish Patel and Bhadra, his wife, officers in the Indian Blindmen's Association from another area--more reserved but among the staunchest supporters of the International Federation. There was Hee Yong Yang, attractive proof reader from the Braille Library in Seoul, Korea, who graduated from a law school in that city with a straight A average and hopes, after legal studies in this country, to become the first blind lawyer in her native land. And then there was Fatima Shah--!

As all of you know by now, these were some of the people who helped to form the International Federation of the Blind at Phoenix. They told us of the problems of the millions of uneducated, unproductive

blind people in the Eastern world, and let us know that they were ready to fight to better their desperate plight. They participated fully both in the social life and the business sessions of the convention. Those who were lucky enough to be delegates to the World Council Meeting worked hard for international federationism and to liberalize and democratize the World Council itself. Their visits with federationists included affiliates in Niagra Falls and Albany, New York; Springfield, Massachusetts; Philadelphia; Denver; Dallas; San Francisco; Los Angeles; Virginia; New Hampshire; Kansas City; Louisville; Idaho; Iowa; Montana; Washington, D. C. and the Capitol Chapter in Sacramento. The response everywhere was "What wonderful people! We fell in love with them." All but a few were able to spend a highly rewarding period at the Orientation Center of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, where Ken Jernigan and his staff introduced them to high state officials and showed them by example how this center works. Nearly all our visitors hope to emulate to some degree what they felt to be the most outstanding orientation center for the blind in the world.

Everyone of these dynamic people has a fascinating story, but I cannot tell them all. The choice is difficult, but Dr. Fatima Shah's is surely one of the most interesting. Fatima, until 6 years ago, was a highly successful obstetrician and gynecologist in Karachi, Pakistan. Her graduate medical work in London has given her a splendid command of English. After she lost her sight however, she did little but raise her two daughters until--she met Dr. Isabelle Grant. As with countless other blind people, Isabelle kindled the spark which stimulated Fatima to help to organize the Pakistan Association of the Blind and become its President.

Her efforts to come to the Phoenix Convention are a saga all in themselves. Although a delegate to the World Council, by mysterious inadvertence her name was omitted by agency personnel from the list to come to this country. Never having travelled alone, even in Pakistan, she hoped to come with her younger daughter, who had just finished college. Just the day before her departure, however, an emergency appendectomy deprived her of this travelling companion. Her efforts to get to Phoenix on time included keeping the banks open on Saturday, fighting irrational restrictions of international airlines, dodging around a major typhoon, and travelling day and night. But she was not to be denied, and she arrived in time for her talk to the convention and to participate in its last two days.

After Phoenix, she surveyed institutions for the blind in the Los Angeles area, and was one of the international guests at a meeting of

more than 100 members of the Active Blind, Inc., a Federation chapter. She also participated in a panel on "Conditions of the Blind in the Pacific" at the UCLA Medical School. The Orientation Center in Des Moines, however, stimulated a real awakening of life, hope, and determination. She resolved to use her professional background to take up work in family planning in Pakistan, where national officials recognize overpopulation due to the high birth rate as one of their most serious problems. She is now receiving more orientation training at Des Moines and a refresher course in planned parenthood procedures.

Ruth and I came to know Fatima best during our overnight journey by train to Springfield, Massachusetts to attend a meeting of the blind from many parts of that State. To say that Fatima captivated her audience would be the grossest of understatements. Her real leadership ability was acknowledged by her election as second vice-president of the IFB.

Although I am sorry the summer is over, it is clear to me that it is the harbinger of even greater things to come as we move forward with the building of the International Federation of the Blind--the new spokesman of all of the blind of the world.

MEDICARE GAINS NEW STRENGTH

Supporters of medical for the aged under social security--a program clearly beneficial to older blind persons as well--have been heartened by the recent Senate adoption (by a vote of 49 to 44) of a modified version of the Administration's medicare bill.

Although predictions currently are not favorable for final enactment of a medicare bill in the present session of Congress, it still has at least a fighting chance. The bill is now pending before a Senate-House conference committee, with final action expected shortly.

One of several stimulating panel discussions during the Phoenix convention of the National Federation involved a searching analysis of the medicare proposals. The following is a summary of views favoring medicare which were presented at the panel session:

In the "war on poverty" officially begun by the Johnson Administration, one of the most important bastions to be conquered is that involving adequate medical care--a salient thus far largely ignored. For

instance, the average public assistance medical care vendor payment is about nine dollars a month per recipient, generally covering only doctors' visits and drugs. The Medical Assistance for the Aged program (Kerr-Mills bill) is operative in only 41 of the 50 states and involves a rigid means test, varying in harshness from state to state.

The American people today are spending an estimated 33 billion dollars annually on medical care, as against only 14 billion spend in 1950. Health insurance pays only 56 per cent of the private hospital bills incurred; and one authority estimates that by 1970, just six years away, a hospital stay will cost an average of \$100 per day, plus the surgeon's fee.

Thus the exorbitant costs of adequate medical care place it out of the reach of retired and disabled Americans--the very persons most in need of attention. They are forced to denude themselves of any small savings accumulated in a lifetime of work, to drain the reserves of their children, and still to wind up destitute in the charity wards of our county hospitals.

Society must therefore assume its responsibility by providing decent medical care through a mandatory insurance system under the Social Security Act. That which retired and disabled Americans need most is full medical care coverage on the insurance principle; hospitalization, doctors' services, drugs and nursing home care. The King-Anderson bill, the Administration's "medicare" proposal, would provide up to 90 days' hospitalization and 180 days' nursing home care, plus some out-patient services. While this bill itself is a weak and partial answer to the desperate needs of the aged and disabled, those of us who have witnessed the painfully slow evolution of the Social Security system over the past generation must be prepared to accept any medical care coverage under that Act as at least a small and hopeful beginning.

A GREAT IDAHO CONVENTION

The Gem State Blind staged one of its most successful conventions in history, at Boise on August 21 to 23.

The social program included coffee on the Capital lawn, swimming at Givens Hot Springs, and a cook-out pancake breakfast. An outstanding job was done on publicity, with more than half a dozen radio and

TV interviews plus full newspaper coverage of the convention.

A constructive tone was set early in the meeting when the Eastern Chapter of the Gem State Blind was readmitted to become the third Chapter in Idaho. One week prior to the convention, the Eastern Chapter had voted unanimously to request reaffiliation.

NFB President, Russell Kletzing gave a stirring address at the Friday night banquet entitled "The Voice of Unity." His speech pointed to the rekindling of federationism throughout the country, and urged federationists to rededicate themselves to this great crusade which is now undergoing a rebirth.

The highlight of the convention was the participation of Miss Lucy Ching, president of the Blind Friends of Hong Kong and supervisor of a center for the blind in that city. Miss Ching told vividly of the conditions of the blind in Hong Kong and of the help desperately needed to develop useful and productive lives for these citizens.

After nearly a year of careful planning by the GSB's Executive Board under legislative chairman Rulon Jensen, an 11-point legislative program was fully discussed and adopted by the convention, as follows: (1) To expand and revitalize the home teacher program; (2) to establish a minimum public assistance floor-to-relief aid program for the blind similar to the law in Nevada; (3) to reintroduce Senate Bill 100 to permit taking of fish and game by proxy for the blind; (4) activate the vending stand program as authorized by the Randolph-Sheppard Act; (5) establish a revolving loan fund for the blind to start a business or occupation; (6) restore the State Sight Conservation and Prevention of Blindness program; (7) to reintroduce the merit system bill for employment of the blind; (8) to provide for reimbursement to school districts for qualified teachers and equipment for blind students in the public schools; (9) modernize the White Cane Law and include guide dogs under its coverage; (10) further investigate and take necessary steps so that the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration will be able to pay advanced registration fees for college and university students; (11) investigate possible telephone rate reductions.

Editor's note: Since the Idaho convention, a meeting of the legislative committee of the Gem State Blind has been scheduled with Governor Smiley to review the organization's legislative program.

THE LOIS BOLTIN STORY: A NEW CHAPTER

By Donald C. Capps

(Editor's note: Mr. Capps, second vice president of the National Federation of the Blind, is also president of South Carolina's Aurora Club of the Blind and editor of its official publication, THE PALMETTO AURORAN.)

In June of 1959, Auroran Lois Boltin made history when she became the first blind person in South Carolina to secure employment as a braille PBX switchboard operator. For five years or until May 9, 1964, Lois capitalized on this golden opportunity, performing her switchboard duties with a Columbia dress shop in an expert fashion. The store's officers repeatedly stated that Lois was by far the best switchboard operator the firm had ever employed.

This outstanding performance record was the result of the excellent training Lois had received at the Minneapolis Center for the Blind. It is doubtful that Lois would have ever taken this training except for the fact she attended the annual convention of the National Federation of the Blind in 1956 at San Francisco, where for the first time she saw a braille switchboard which immediately gained her interest and fascination.

Unfortunately, Lois's employer made a drastic reduction in its telephone operation a few months ago, which resulted in eliminating the switchboard--and its operator with it. At this point many a blind person would have lapsed into despair; nor could Lois have been blamed had this happened, for she still remembered that it had taken six months to secure her first switchboard position.

However, Lois Boltin is not an average person. She immediately went into action, contacting Aurora Club leaders whom she knew would assist in any way possible to secure another switchboard position. Things change a great deal in five years, and it was found necessary to secure an up-to-date list of employers with switchboards in the Columbia area. As in the past, telephone company officials cooperated by promptly furnishing this information.

No less than thirty contacts were made with employers over a two-month period. Although assisted by Aurora people in these contacts, Lois personally followed through on every prospect, and it was her patience, perseverance, and persistence which led to the landing of another switchboard position on July 31, 1964. Seibels Bruce and

Company, a large insurance firm, was favorably impressed with Lois from the first time she entered their office in mid-June. Following several subsequent conferences, including contacts with telephone company officials who gave an unqualified recommendation, Lois received the heart-warming news that she had been officially hired.

For a second time, an enlightened Columbia employer had given a courageous and talented blind lady an opportunity to earn her own way, which is all she wants or needs from anyone. However, this was not the first time that the Aurora Club of the Blind had been supported by Seibels Bruce, the civic-minded firm had previously contributed to the erection of the Aurora Center, as well as to White Cane Week, and was familiar with the work and program of the Aurora Club.

The new switchboard position has several advantages over Lois's former job. Chief among these is a twentyper cent increase in salary and shorter working hours. The location is also perfect, being only one half block from Lois's residence. In addition to operating the switchboard, Lois will also serve as receptionist.

And so another chapter of the Lois Boltin story, which has already received wide attention in publications throughout the nation, has unfolded to revive the admiration of all who are genuinely interested in the cause of the blind. Her remarkable story would not have had so happy an ending were it not for the faith and determination of one plucky blind girl, coupled with the unwavering support of the organized blind of her state.

CASH AWARDS FOR BLIND AUTHORS

Awards totalling \$200 will be given annually to blind authors and readers of DIALOGUE, recorded magazine for the blind, as the result of an endowment made by Ways and Means for the Blind of Augusta, Georgia, it has been announced by Don O. Nold, executive-secretary and editor of the publication.

"These awards will be made in the memory of Walter G. Holmes, a Tennessee newspaper man, who, in his lifetime, was exceedingly helpful to the blind," commented Nold in announcing the grant. "It was through his efforts that a grant of more than one-half million dollars was made by Matilda Ziegler to establish a magazine in Braille and it has been publishing a monthly edition for more than 40 years."

DIALOGUE has received this grant because of the desire of Hubert Smith, founder of Ways and Means for the Blind, to encourage blind persons to enter the writing profession. Fifty dollars will be awarded with each of the quartely editions, totaling \$200 in all. The \$50 will be divided as follows: \$25 for the best short story; \$15 for the best piece of non-fiction; and \$10 for the best poem. A committee of judges will soon be named to select the winning literary efforts. Only legally blind persons are eligible to compete for the awards.

Persons wishing to submit short stories of not more than 3500 words, non-fiction of not more than 1500 words, or poetry should send them to Literary award editor, Dialogue Publications, Inc., 3206 Grove Avenue, Berwyn, Illinois. No material will be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope and sufficient postage.

MONITOR MINIATURES

The Progressive Blind of Missouri plans a packed program of speeches and panels at its third annual convention November 13 through 15 at Kansas City's Aladdin Hotel. . . . The Alabama Federation of the Blind will hold its annual convention at the Whitley Hotel in Montgomery on October 9 and 10, with the National Federation's second vice-president, Donald Capps, as principal banquet speaker.

NEWSWEEK Magazine is now being recorded weekly on two sides of two long-playing discs by the American Printing House for the Blind, Frankfort, Kentucky. Copies are reportedly mailed promptly to blind individuals, schools and circulating libraries, with limits set only by available funds. . . . THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL is now available in braille at a subscription price to the blind of five dollars per year. A total of 125 copies are mailed to the Library of Congress each month by Philadelphia's Volunteer Service for the Blind, which transcribes the magazine for use in 10 foreign countries along with all 50 of our states.

George Cohen of Montreal, Canada, totally blind, is a public relations officer, fashion writer, and adviser to Canadian dress designers and hair dressers. . . . The National Association of the Physically Handicapped has re-elected Marilyn W. Woods as national president at the groups annual convention in Detroit. . . . Experiments on a reading machine for the blind are being conducted at Stanford University--in the form of a small mechanism comprised of photoelectric cells which transmit

the shape of each letter to a set of reeds which vibrate distinctively to the touch....

Thomas G. Bell has been named executive director of the Colorado Department of Public Welfare, succeeding John A. Dunn, who was acting director since Guy R. Justis resigned the post to become director of the American Public Welfare Association.... Delaware's Department of Public Welfare also has a new director: John E. Hiland Jr., a former Wisconsin welfare official who succeeds Miss E. Kathryn Pennypacker. "Christmas and the Year Ahead," a braille book published every year for blind children by the Braille Institute of America (Los Angeles) appeared in August under the editorship of Jean Kentle with a total of 100 pages of stories and poems geared to the interests of third to sixth-graders....

A blind woman of 65, her blind daughter and the latter's two children were evicted from a Washington D. C., apartment in August, according to a news story prominently featured by the WASHINGTON POST. The two blind women, Irene Stevenson and her daughter Bernice, were reportedly unable to meet the \$82.50 monthly rental on a combined welfare income of \$148.00 a month....

The Service Committee for the Blind, 935 North Sycamore, Lansing Michigan, offers for sale an aluminum folding cane--white, red-tipped, with a gold anodized handle, weighing about seven ounces, reportedly available in any length with either a straight or curved handle. Information and prices on request.... South Carolina's Aurora Club, statewide affiliate of the N.F.B., reports its most profitable White Cane Week campaign to date. Held last May, the fund raising week netted more than \$2,000, representing a 20 per cent increase over 1963....

While attending the WCWB meeting in New York City, President Russ Kletzing met with many Federation groups in the area. A safari to Albany was climaxed by a meeting of the Tri-City Council of the Blind and the Glen Falls Chapter at which Kletzing and Miss Lucy Ching from Hong Kong both spoke. The Springfield Chapter arranged a similar meeting attended by representatives of a majority of the member chapters of the Associated Blind of Massachusetts at which Kletzing and Dr. Fatima Shah shared the speaking duties. In a conference and discussion session, President Kletzing also met with representatives of the Empire State's Affiliates in the New York City area, the Tri-Burrough Chapter, the Brooklyn Chapter, the Staten Island Chapter, and ESAB president, Dominic DiJohn. Russ Kletzing's final journey was to Philadelphia accompanied by Dr. tenBroek and Lee Ah Kow, President of the Selangor Society of the Blind in Malaysia. Many of the

Chapters of the Pennsylvania Federation of the Blind were represented at the Philadelphia meeting.

Clovernook Printing House for the Blind, 6990 Hamilton Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45231, is able to provide 60 lb. Kraft paper suitable for use with a slate and stylus. It is approximately the same weight as the paper on which the braille edition of this magazine is printed but with a less glossy texture. 400 sheets are sent in a package for \$2.00. The paper is letter size, $8\frac{1}{2}$ by 11 inches....

The main theme these days of the Maryland Citizens Committee for Police Relations, under the chairmanship of Dr. Leon Robert Saiontz (who has written a poem on the theme) is "To encourage the Blind and help build up their morale." Says Clarice Arnold: "We are pleased and proud that a group of humanitarians such as this have expressed a willingness, backed by ability, to assist our cause in any way possible."

A staunch Federationist and an equally staunch pro Federationist have triumphed in recent political elections. Perrin D. McElroy, an active member of the Progressive Blind of Missouri, won the democratic primary in his bid for reelection as Public Administrator of Jackson County, Missouri by a substantial margin of more than 8,000 votes. George Rittgers, PBM president, was area chairman in the campaign. Representative Walter S. Baring of Nevada, long-time champion of Federation legislative measures, also won the democratic primary on the road to re-election to his seat in Congress.

Frank H. Kells, Executive Director of the Sacramento Society for the Blind, has accepted the directorship of the Center for the Blind in Phoenix, Arizona, effective November 1....

Rienzi Alagiyawanna and the International Federation of the Blind both received national recognition when Senator Vance Hartke of Indiana included an account of Rienzi's visit to Kansas City in the Congressional Record for August 19. After having read the Braille Monitor, Senator Hartke also told in his own words the story of the inauguration of the International Federation of the Blind at Phoenix under the inspiration of Dr. tenBroek.

The welfare achievements of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, under its dedicated director Kenneth Jernigan (also the NFB's first vice-president) were eulogized recently in a U.S. Senate speech by Senator Jack Miller of Iowa. Calling attention to an Associated Press article on the Iowa visit by Dr. Fatima Shah of Pakistan and Rienzi

Alagiyawanna of Ceylon, the senator pointed out that the article "emphasizes the pioneering work of the Iowa Commission for the Blind, an agency which is known around the world."

Among the distinguished blind visitors from abroad who were feted by Federationists this summer were two directors of the Braille Library of Japan: Kazuo Jonma and Yoshinori Kato. While in Kentucky, along with Hong Kong's Lucy Ching and others, the two Japanese dignitaries were guests of the Kentucky Federation's president Robert Whitehead on a tour of the American Printing House for the Blind and various state facilities for welfare and education of the sightless....

In a recent edict on federal employment of the handicapped, President Johnson called on the heads of all executive departments and agencies to "open the door of employment opportunity to handicapped but occupationally qualified persons" by a combination of retraining employees, re-engineering of jobs, and "dealing with the handicapped on the basis of ability and fair play."....

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BLIND IN THE COMPUTER FIELD

By

Dr. Theodore D. Sterling

Director

Medical Computing Center

University of Cincinnati, Ohio

(From Data Processing Digest, May 1964)

With comments by Russell Kletzing

Computers have opened new opportunities for the blind in many professional areas including all levels of programing. Although a number of blind are already employed successfully in computer related fields, the professional outlets in this area are new. Not only are computer users unfamiliar with the potentials of the blind but neither the blind nor individuals who direct their rehabilitation are aware of the new opportunities that exist. Recognizing the many problems that arise now in facilitating the training and placing of blind in related professions, the Association for Computing Machinery has formed a committee to deal with the education of blind, rehabilitation workers, and computer users. This committee consists of representatives of ACM, the Vocational Rehabilitation Administration, the Na-

tional Institutes of Health, Offices of State Divisions of Rehabilitation, and of a number of technically knowledgeable individuals in engineering, computing, and rehabilitation.

The involvement of the ACM as a professional group in this venture is motivated by three factors which combine to open an exciting new area of activity for the blind as well as computer users.

1. The blind appear to be especially suited for computer work.
2. Technical problems preventing the blind from independent work on computers have been solved.
3. There are few if any consistent professional activities for the intelligent blind.

The special facility of the blind for programing lies in the intense self training they must undergo and the rigorous demands made of them constantly by the environment which they must be able to meet. A blind who is able to consider independent professional activity has obtained a mastery over his environment rooted in

- a. a superbly trained and organized memory
- b. a well developed spatial orientation
- c. the ability to keep in mind and act upon a carefully designed plan of action in any situation.

These are obviously qualities that make for a good programmer. The memory training becomes useful in learning rapidly many different computer languages. The spatial orientation transfers easily to orienting within the core memory especially with respect to the many possible directions in which the program may move statements and data. The constant planning of all daily activities enables the blind to keep in mind simultaneously all aspects of the program flow when developing any of its specific parts. All these factors combine to make the blind fast, accurate, and economical programmers.

Because of their trained aptitudes, a number of blind have drifted into programing work almost from the beginning of computer utilization. However, they were always dependent on help from sighted colleagues in de-bugging and other necessary activities. As long as this dependence existed the blind could not hope to gain entry into industrial computer work. This was true not so much because they tied down a sighted programmer and thus became expensive to employ (although this certainly is a factor) but mainly because an acute shortage exists of programmers in general. Also it is questionable if programing can be very efficient if the programmer can not explore intermediate printouts, listings, and memory dumps at leisure.

Work done at the Medical Computing Center at the University of Cincinnati has largely removed obstacles that prevent independent access of the blind to all phases of computer work. The major development was the invention of a technique by which a readable braille is produced directly from the high speed printer without any modifications. The program has been written for the IBM 1401 but may be translated for any other machine.

A standard printer (such as the IBM 1403) may be used with no modification. The braille thus produced is slightly larger and a little different from standard braille but quite readable.

Grade I braille is used entirely because programing material does not lend itself to the shorthand characteristics of Grade II. Special punctuation symbols have been devised for the particular purposes of programing.

In addition to the brailier, a number of other aids have been developed. These are a card reader, a console reader, and special paper for preparing programs for punching by a clerk. All these techniques make the blind programmer completely independent in his work.

Now that technical problems are eliminated and the desirability of attracting the blind into computer work is recognized, it remains to deal with the employment opportunities of the intelligent blind.

Although a great deal of effort has been expended in the past to develop skills for them, intelligent blind have had difficulty in finding satisfactory employment. With the phenomenal development of computer applications in many business, technical, and scientific fields the way is opened to utilize suitably the small segment of our population that has been prevented from useful activity by their sensory deprivation. For instance it is difficult for a blind accountant to find a job. On the other hand, a blind accountant who can develop and supervise computer based procedures is in no way handicapped and becomes a desirable employee. The same is true in many other fields already and will increasingly be the case as time goes on.

The work and future plans of the ACM Committee on the Blind can be understood best against this background. Rehabilitation people are worlds away from computer work. Not only must they be educated in computing but facilities for training must be established. The latter needs the cooperation of existing computer installations and of the mem-

bers of the profession. Similarly education within the profession is needed for placing of blind trainees. Finally there are related matters of computer application to the ability of the blind to negotiate in our world that rightly fall within the province of the committee. Foremost of these is the modification of the short hand version of braille (Braille II) so that easier computer translation and formatting are possible. The committee hopes to accomplish all of its primary aims within the next five years.

COMMENTS

Dr. Sterling's article represents a combination of insight and misconception concerning the blind--but curiously both are directed toward the constructive goal of promoting job opportunities in Computing Programming for blind persons. Illustrating misconceptions involved is the third of Dr. Sterling's premises for guiding the blind into computer work: "There are few if any consistent professional activities for the intelligent blind." Although it is desperately important to open up more professional opportunities for the blind, it is surely not accurate to say that there are "few if any" such opportunities.

There are also "positive" misconceptions woven through the article. The concept of the "outstanding blind person" with the highly developed memory which compensates for his lack of vision appears to have influenced the author. Unfortunately, in our history this has been coupled with the concept that all other blind people who are "not remarkable" are absolutely incapable.

When misconceptions are working for us--or used to open up job opportunities--I would not propose to fight about them. I would venture however, that the fact of the matter is that a blind person would do about as well in the computer field as a sighted person with equivalent intelligence and aptitude--probably neither better nor worse. In any case, this is a new field that all young blind men and women should examine with a view to their futures.

R.K.

THE SNARE OF THE SINGLE FARE

By
Lawrence Marcelino

From the California Council Bulletin

Apropos of the resolution adopted by the 1964 convention of the National Federation of the Blind in opposition to a legislative bill pending before the United States Congress to permit a blind person to travel with his guide as an air line passenger for a single fare, the following incident is cited: A self-employed blind lady who resides in San Francisco traveled alone to Portland, visited friends there, then took a Great Northern Railway train which took her into the State of Washington where she visited friends in a number of cities, including Seattle. On June 8, 1964, the lady went to the ticket window of the Great Northern Railway to procure her seat reservation so that she could return to San Francisco. Upon being asked for the reservation the clerk left the window and soon returned with another man who was identified by the blind lady's friend as the station master. The latter asked the lady if her friend was also going to San Francisco. He was told that she was not. He then stated that blind persons are not permitted to travel without guides. He stated that it is a company rule that blind persons may not travel alone on Great Northern trains.

The blind woman stood her ground, however, pointing out that she had purchased her ticket in San Francisco, traveled in the State of Oregon and in various cities in the State of Washington and now wanted to return home to San Francisco. She pointed out that she did not need a guide, did not want one, nor could she afford one. Finally, she was admitted to her car after giving positive assurances that she could manage the trip without a guide.

The two-for-one concession will continue to hurt the blind because it is premised on a false and harmful image of the blind as helpless beings. Incidents such as that described above are becoming more numerous. The right of unfettered movement is a basic one in our country. Extension of the single fare concession will jeopardize it for all blind persons.

CONGRESS AUTHORIZES WHITE CANE DAY

The National Federation of the Blind posted another major victory

on September 24 (as this issue of THE BRAILLE MONITOR was going to press) with passage by the Senate of the long-awaited White Cane Safety Day resolution. Meanwhile, other Federation-sponsored bills were still awaiting final action.

The joint resolution, approved in August by the House of Representatives, authorizes President Johnson to proclaim October 15 every year as "White Cane Safety Day" throughout the country, to be observed with "appropriate ceremonies and activities."

At the time of this writing there was still no report from the joint Senate-House conference committee on the disability insurance bill (S. 1268,) liberalizing disability payments, and the public assistance bill (H.R. 9393) which would extend from 12 to 36 months the present full income exemption for a blind recipient working under an approved plan of rehabilitation.

The congressional break-through on the White Cane climaxed a renewed Federation campaign begun last year at the Philadelphia convention, which endorsed a resolution urging a Presidential proclamation on the issue. Subsequently, in response to requests from federationists in his own state and from the NFB's Washington Chief John F. Nagle, Congressman Robert Corbett of Pennsylvania introduced the resolution into the house as H. J. 753.

Following months of inactivity the White Cane proposal won approval from the House Judiciary Committee and went to the floor where it was passed by voice vote on August 17. In its present form the resolution reads:

"Joint Resolution to authorize the President to proclaim October 15 of each year as White Cane Safety Day. Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives... That the President is hereby authorized to issue annually a proclamation designating October 15 as White Cane Safety Day and calling upon the people of the United States to observe such day with appropriate ceremonies and activities."
